

ISSUE #23

enduro

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FUEL INJECTION HEAVEN

REACHING FOR THE SKIES
ON HUSQVARNA'S 2018
TWO-STROKES

WADE YOUNG
SOUTH AFRICAN PRINCE AIMING
FOR HARD ENDURO'S CROWN

2018 125S HEAD-TO-HEAD
SHERCO AND BETA BABY
SCREAMERS ON TEST

ERZBERG EXPERIENCE
WORLD'S TOUGHEST TEST OF KTM'S
NEW TPI 250

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CRF-ROAD WEAPON



EDITORIAL #23

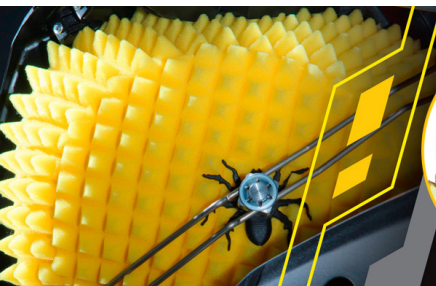
125S ARE BACK!

The future's bright, smokey and full of 125s. We've gotten ourselves a bit giddy with Enduro illustrated #23 thinking about how important the wave of new model 125s are. How important is it that manufacturers like Beta and Sherco have brought new models to the party for 2018? It's crucial.

125 two strokes feed our sport. How else are riders going to arrive in the bigger classes full of the fizz and passion for enduro if they don't start out on a 125? Plenty of old boys will tell you that when you learn to ride on a 125 two-stroke you learn well and you learn best of all.

It's the first step for many riders, particularly kids moving up onto bigger bikes but it's also a stepping stone for any age rider starting out into the sport. The more rideable 125s get the more attractive they become to all-comers, not just wannabe racers.

Another crucial aspect is that manufacturers are taking 125 development seriously. We can't stress how important that is to ensure the cogs of enduro life keep turning. That Beta, Sherco, TM, KTM and Husqvarna continue to make 125s is to be applauded – they are cementing the future. **E**



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A



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THE BIG 3

FACTORY BIKE PORN

Factory prepped goodness from the heart of the EnduroGP World Championship paddock

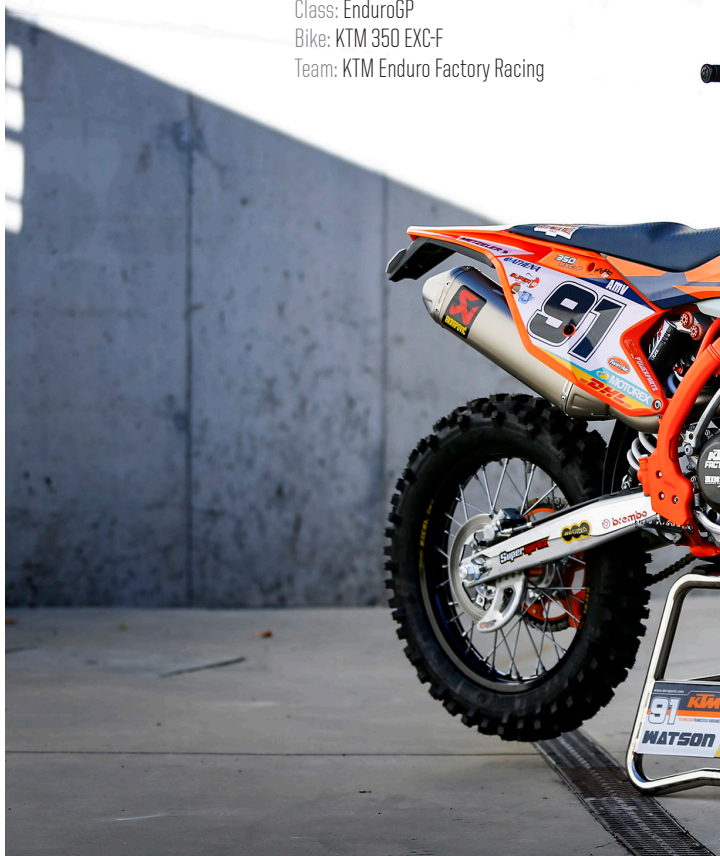
#3.1

Rider: Nathan Watson

Class: EnduroGP

Bike: KTM 350 EXC-F

Team: KTM Enduro Factory Racing





THE BIG 3

FACTORY BIKE PORN

#3.2

Rider: Brad Freeman

Class: Enduro Junior

Bike: Beta 300 RR

Team: Boano Beta Racing







THE BIG 3

FACTORY BIKE PORN

#3.3

Rider: Loïc Larrieu

Class: EnduroGP

Bike: Yamaha WR450F

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gallery #23

Photos: Future7Media/Red Bull Media Archive



WORLD XTREME ENDURO SUPR

erzbergrodeo[®]

JUNE 15th-18th 2

The ErzbergRodeo is a race like no other – so much so, that it's now grown into the must-do dirt bike year. Dirt bikes and tough enduro riding, all mixed with a colossal amount of fun – in between the b pain – ensure everyone goes home counting down the days until they get to do it again. For 2017 Al the star of the show, collecting his first outright win and making Carl's Dinner (pictured) looks like



the festival of the
shots of beer and
fredo Gomez was
child's play.

PRESENTED BY





All hands on deck



Manuel Lettebichler



Heroes come in all shapes and sizes, but none more so than Billy Bolt. The young Brit almost lost a toe in a training incident four weeks prior to Erzberg. It took two surgeries to stitch his little toe back onto his foot – nasty stuff. Refusing to quit, Bolt rode in an oversized boot, led part of the race and brought his Husqvarna home in a magnificent seventh.



The only way out is up!





Struggle is real



When the start flag drops, the bulls**t stops. At the strike of noon, 500 of hard enduro's finest blast out of the Iron Giant's quarry floor for a race the majority of which will never finish.







The ErzbergRodeo festival is all about having fun and getting a little loose. Friday evening's Raid on Eisenerz is when the entire 1800 rider entry descends on the quiet Austrian town at the foot of the quarry for burnouts and debauchery. Even the odd Storm Tropper gets called in for duty.





A massive tyre gamble for Jonny Walker failed to see him collect a fourth Red Bull Hare Scramble win. Despite looking good early on – sharing the lead with Billy Bolt, Cody Webb and then Gomez – Walker's soft rubber was chewed up on Carl's Dinner's boulders. By the time he got to Dynamite (pictured) he was practically pushing his way home to an eventual fifth.





Paul Bolton



Graham Jarvis



South Africa's Scott Bouverie wrestles his way to the summit of Lazy Noon on his way to 12th overall. With four finishers in the top 20 – matching Great Britain and Spain – South Africa is establishing itself as one of the top performing hard enduro nations.





There may have been 25 finishers of this year's Red Bull Hare Scramble, but there was only one who achieved that winning result he'd been growing towards for the last five years. In 2017 he rode like a champion, by not cracking under the pressure of the occasion, while hardly putting a foot wrong. What this demonstrates is confidence only time will tell, but we can expect him to become a regular top-step podium fixture.



Alfredo Gomez

ner. Alfredo Gomez finally
a true Erzberg champion
oes to the Spaniard's
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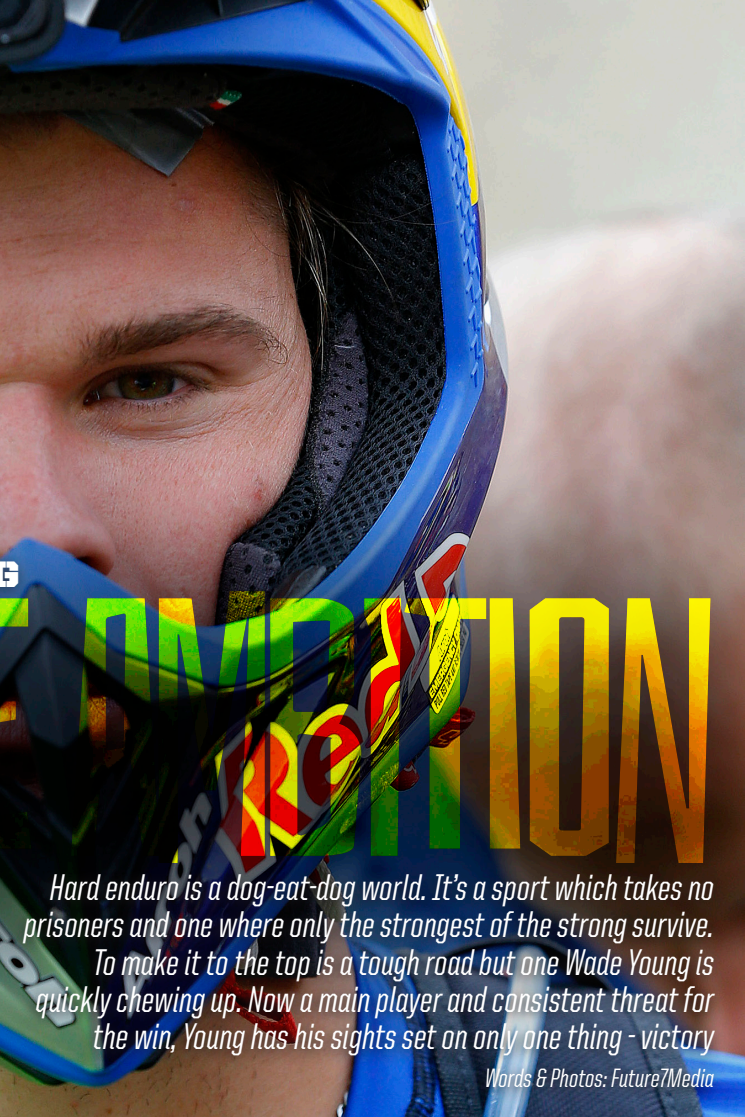
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IN CONVERSATION – WADE YOUNG

EXTREME



G

COMPETITION

Hard enduro is a dog-eat-dog world. It's a sport which takes no prisoners and one where only the strongest of the strong survive. To make it to the top is a tough road but one Wade Young is quickly chewing up. Now a main player and consistent threat for the win, Young has his sights set on only one thing - victory

Words & Photos: Future7Media



**"I DON'T NEED ALL THE TRIALS
SKILLS THE OTHER GUYS HAVE...
I CAN GET OVER EVERY ROCK, GET
UP EVERY HILL AND THROUGH EVERY
RIVERBED... IT DOESN'T WORRY ME."**



"I like to be looked at as the underdog." When it comes to the elite of hard enduro, Wade Young is one guy who likes to play his cards close to his chest. He's quiet, camera shy even and often unnoticeable in the paddock. But when the chequered flag waves, nine times out of ten he's standing up to be counted, before slipping back into the shadows once more.

Calling Paddock – a sparsely populated village in South Africa – home, it's understandable that Young is somewhat of an enigma in enduro circles. Living a 17-hour commute from Europe, it's easy for him to stay off radar, keep his head down and train like a dog.

And it's a tactic that's now steadily paying off for the Sherco rider. 2016 marked a solid season in his first year with the French manufacturer claiming a Hell's Gate win and stage wins at Red Bull Romaniacs.

Now, having freshly pocketed a pivotal Extreme XL Lagares victory, Young is ready and waiting to fight for the top step of the podium...



Porto.

Porto.

EXTREME AMPLI



"I WAS A 16-YEAR-OLD BOY WHO HAD JUST WON THE ROOF OF AFRICA – I THOUGHT IF I COULD WIN THERE THEN I COULD WIN ANYWHERE!"

Why not being a trials rider doesn't matter...

"Although I don't come from a trials background I can do more "trials riding" on my enduro bike than I can on my trials bike. I've realised that I don't need all the trials skills that some of the other guys have got. I've got the skills needed to get over all the obstacles the other guys have to get over too – so what they can do, I can do too.

"In a race I can get over every rock, get up every hill and through every riverbed, so it doesn't necessarily worry me. Luckily I'm a naturally big guy and I would consider myself the strongest rider in the paddock to offset that finesse element. I do use a bit more energy so maybe that's my weakness but it's a work in process and something I'm improving on all the time. But my speed is there – I'm one of the fastest if not the fastest – so everything is coming together."



Why hard enduro is one big learning curve...

"When I won the Roof of Africa in 2012 I was just a 16-year-old boy. I thought if I could win there then I could win anywhere. I put a lot of pressure on myself in those beginning years. Not to follow on from that success but just because I wanted to win so much more. I'd beaten the best in the world and felt I should be doing it again.

"I raced The Tough One in the UK the following January. It was the first time I'd seen snow. And I was so cold too – freezing. We were total rookies for that race, we didn't really have a clue what was going on and that was the first time I rode in mud. I remember it was so slick. I'd come down a hill, grab the brakes and end up on my ass facing back up the hill. I'd no idea what was going on there. It was so slippery and I'd never seen anything like it before. I was on a standard bike with standard suspension and hard mousses. I'd also got the wrong clothes too.

"I guess it took a while to realise just how tough and varied hard enduro is and why I wasn't beating all of them, all of the time. It was a big learning road for sure, everything was so new – the terrain, the bike, the technical skills – and I had some growing up to do too."



"I'D COME DOWN A HILL, GRAB THE BRAKES AND END UP ON MY ASS FACING BACK UP THE HILL. I'D NO IDEA WHAT WAS GOING ON THERE."

Why EnduroGP wasn't for him...

"Initially I wanted to go there. I thought I had the speed but to do that type of enduro is difficult. You need to go a week before the race, you've got to have a large team of people able to help and I just couldn't afford it and also wasn't able to train in those conditions. At the same time I had more opportunities and support coming in hard enduro. I wasn't winning but I was already knocking on the door of doing well in hard enduro so that's probably why I just went with it."

Why Sherco is the right package for success...

"The KTM is a good bike but I felt like I was stalling out in the programme I was in. I needed that extra push for extra backing and support to step my game up some more. Unfortunately KTM couldn't offer me that at the time, so moving over to Sherco made sense. The support and set up package they were offering was exactly what I needed and more to allow me to focus on my riding. I've got a great relationship with my mechanic, we gel well and that is making the difference."

"Sherco are a small factory but one that's growing quickly. But in regard to management, it's a small core group of people and in some ways that's better for me. It's easy to speak directly with the boss. If we need something done on the race team it's easy to get it done quickly and as a racer that's important to know. Now that I'm in my second year with the team I'm trying to spend a bit more time in France. It's been good for training and testing."



IN

**"IF WE NEED
SOMETHING DONE
ON THE RACE
TEAM IT'S EASY
TO GET IT DONE
QUICKLY AND AS
A RACER THAT'S
IMPORTANT TO
KNOW."**







Why home is where the heart is...

"I do enjoy being home, I have a lot of friends there and that's the place I enjoy being the most. Paddock is basically a big farming area and my family does the transport for the sugar cane on the farm. My father carts it to the mill, he's got about seven or eight trucks. I also split my time between Paddock and Durban, which is 40 minutes away, where most of my friends are.

"For me it's got good and bad points. It's my home so I know it well – I know where to grocery shop, I know what restaurants to eat in, I know everything, it's home. And a lot of South Africa is pretty much the same so no matter where I am I know what's going on. Whereas when I come to Europe I do feel a bit lost at times and the cultures change a lot. What sucks about South Africa is that it's so far away. It's a difficult commute – including layovers it's a 17-hour trip.

"But nine times out of ten I'm riding and testing the same day when I get to France. Basically I leave the afternoon beforehand at 4pm and by 8 o'clock the next day I'm in Europe. It doesn't take too much of a toll as our time zones are the same as mainland Europe. It's just the lack of sleep but I'm getting good at sleeping on planes now."

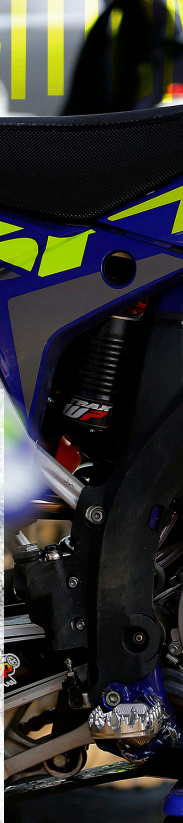
**"...IF I CAN PUT
EVERYTHING
TOGETHER FOR
THE WEEK THEN
I CAN SURE WIN
ROMANIACS."**



Why Red Bull Romaniacs is the one to win...

"I don't have terrain that resembles Red Bull Romaniacs at home but it's a race that's always been good to me. I seem to be good at the hills. I think I'm a good long distance rider and enjoy the long days and multiple day races. I seem to get into good grooves on long days and when I see the guys suffering, I just enjoy it a bit more.

"I believe I've already got everything I need – the speed, skills and package is there – it's now a point of putting it altogether. Last year I won days one and four but then day two was bad for me. I wore new trousers, which resulted in continuously sliding off the back of the bike. On the first hill three people passed me – it was a bad day I ended up playing catch-up the following days. I think if I can put everything together for the full week then I can sure win Romaniacs." e



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**"I BELIEVE I'VE
ALREADY GOT
EVERYTHING
I NEED - THE
SPEED, SKILLS
AND PACKAGE
IS THERE - IT'S
NOW A POINT
OF PUTTING IT
ALTOGETHER."**

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OVER TO YOU

BLU SMOKE RISING

Launched at the motorsport complex just outside Ales, in Southern France, the home for Ales Trem Extreme Enduro, Sherco's 2018 models arrived with a new addition to the family – please be upstanding for the SE-R 125 two-stroke...

Words: Jon Pearson / Photos: JM Pouget



HERCO

SHERCO SE-R 125 LAUNCH



Sherco is rightly proud of its rapid growth as a major player in the enduro market. Quadrupling the factory's size in recent years has seen production jump from 25 to 100 bikes per day. Annual production has risen from 5,500 to 22,000 units per year and in monetary value that means they're now operating with a €30 million turnover compared to €10 million a few years ago. For the Teissier family run business, born just a generation ago, things are certainly growing at a rapid rate.

That growth is also seeing results on the race track too. Winning the 2016 EnduroGP World Championship has been backed up by victories and podiums in hard enduro plus stage wins in the Dakar Rally. Adding in success in trials – Sherco's first love – ensures the French manufacturer are now a serious global player.

For their entire 2018 model line-up (full details in issue #24 of Enduro illustrated) Sherco look to further expand into both the North and South American markets. But it's news of an all-new SE-R 125 two-stroke that's really made everyone – young and old – sit up and take notice.

Sherco's reasons behind the new SE-R 125 are all about trying to encourage younger riders into the Sherco brand as much as filling a hole in their own model line-up. The SE-R 125 "completes the line-up" as Thomas Tessier puts it.

It's also about growing as a manufacturer, which means giving dealers – particularly across Europe where the 125 market is strong – a bike that appeals to the kids in their showrooms and during try-out days.

However, this is a bike that will attract the eye of anyone in the showroom. A completely new 125 two-stroke engine has been under development for 18 months. And the chassis is also new too. Arriving to the showroom as a "premium product" with a decent selection of quality parts removes the need to spend extra cash on suspension upgrades or a new exhaust.



**"...THE SE-R 125 IS
HIGHLY DEVELOPED
SHERCO'S HISTORICAL
GOAL OF IT BECOMING
BIGGEST SELLING BIKE"**

**AMONG THE MOST
D ENGINES IN
Y WITH THE END
ING ONE OF THEIR
MODELS."**



SHERCO SE-R 125 LAUNCH



**"...THE CARBURETED SHERCO SE-R 125
EMITS LESS CO₂ THAN THE ELECTRICALLY
POWERED SHERCO SE-R 125
HOW THE ELECTRONIC POWER**



**SHERCO ENGINE MEETS EURO 4
OVER WORK IN PERFECTING
R-VALVE TIMES ITS INPUT."**

ENGINE DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

A chat with the chief engineer for the 125 engine, Lionel Cabroler, points to the key area of development – the 125 two-stroke engine. Cabroler explains the SE-R 125 is among the most highly developed engines in Sherco's history with the end goal of it becoming one of their biggest selling models.

Development bikes actually made their way to different parts of the world for testing with riders in different conditions and in climates from Sweden to Australia. Guys like Anders Eriksson and Matt Phillips have all had a hand in development.

The first concept for consideration with the engine was more torque. "The goal was to make it more rideable for every rider," explains Cabroler. Concentrating on ignition timing for the electronic power valve opening, plus changes to the actual height and angle of the exhaust port were key aspects in achieving this. Plenty of work also went into the shape of the piston and cylinder head to achieve a more rideable power delivery.

The SE-R125 gets the new V-Force 4R reed valve, which is made from a soft rubber instead of plastic. This ensures a better seal when closed – the petals rest against the softer material creating a tighter seal (it's also being developed for the 250 and 300 two strokes and will likely feature on models later in the year).

One point to make is that the carbureted Sherco engine meets Euro 4 emission laws thanks to some clever work in perfecting how the electronic power-valve times its input. Controlling gases with a two-stroke engine and the mind-boggling dark art of header pipe shape meant Sherco went through 12 exhaust prototypes before they settled on the standard one.

SHERCO SE-R 125 LAUNCH



**"IF SHERCO'S AIM WAS TO MAKE A RIDEABLE BIKE
WITH SMOOTHER AND MORE PROGRESSIVE POWER
DELIVERY THEN THEY ACHIEVED THEIR GOAL."**



BETTING CRANKY

Some of the biggest engine work went into creating inertia at the crankshaft to improve the rider's feel for grip. The breakthrough came, says Cabrolrier, "when our test rider Jordan Curvalle started to talk about how quickly the engine revs dropped when he pulled the clutch in, comparing it to the four-stroke engine character."

Adding more weight to the rotating mass of the crank and ignition rotor – cinematic inertia Cabrolrier calls it – means the engine keeps some of its revs and momentum when you are using the clutch while riding. Less inertia means the revs drop lower when the clutch is pulled and therefore takes longer and wastes energy to regain revs when you feed the clutch out again. In short, increasing inertia provides more constant power delivery, throttle response and a less peaky bike.

Another important detail developed over many hours of R&D across different riding conditions and climates is the engine-running temperature. The coolant's passage around the cylinder – in particular the combustion chamber – was an important design aspect. The cylinder head is designed so that the coolant runs around all faces and works in the hottest parts of the engine.

Mindful of the realities of regular enduro riders and normal weekend events, the engine and in particular the piston is designed with durability in mind. The result is longer periods of more consistent performance with reduced maintenance levels.

SHERCO SE-R 125 LAUNCH

IN IT FOR THE RIDE

The result is an efficient but torquey little 125 motor and easily a contender for “best in class” award. If Sherco's aim was to make a rideable bike with smoother and more progressive power delivery then they achieved their goal. The Akrapovic silencer as standard sounds and looks sweet, setting a purposeful tone from the start. At 93kg without fuel (Sherco claim) it makes for a sweet handling bike too. From the start it feels agile and accurate in a way that every 125 should, but also in a characteristically Sherco way too.

The SE-R 125 comes with WP Xplor 48mm forks with preload adjusters on top, much like Husqvarna's TX 125 does. And that's a detail which points at the purpose Sherco wants this model to have about it - an out-of-the-crate, built-to-race bike. On test the WP suspension was actually a little too stiff in the initial stroke and springy for me. But we didn't have much ground for twiddling the dials and chances are the average rider who'll race the SE-R 125 will be lighter than me and better suited to the standard settings.

Sherco's chassis, handling and turning skills are always strong and this new little bike exploits that agility to the max. A touch more steering angle and a 15mm shorter overall frame length further improve those characteristics.



“SHERCO'S CHASSIS, HANDLING AND TURNING SKILLS ARE ALWAYS STRONG AND THIS NEW LITTLE BIKE EXPLOITS THAT AGILITY TO THE MAX. A TOUCH MORE STEERING ANGLE AND A 15MM SHORTER OVERALL FRAME LENGTH FURTHER IMPROVE THOSE CHARACTERISTICS.”



**ASSIS, HANDLING AND TURNING
WAYS STRONG... AND A 15MM
RALL FRAME LENGTH FURTHER
SE CHARACTERISTICS."**



SHERCO SE-R 125 LAUNCH



**"ORDINARILY WE'D WRITE A
'THREE THINGS WE'D LIKE TO
SEE' ON THE END OF A LAUNCH
REPORT BUT HONESTLY THERE
AREN'T THREE THINGS TO BE
CRITICAL ABOUT HERE."**

From 6,000rpm to where power tails off, the two engine maps deliver a difference of 3hp with peak power at 10,500rpm. Testing both power maps on the same loop of southern French woods did show a difference. The feeling was small but also useful.

If you're in attack mode then the full power map will keep it singing through the range. But across some of the hard, loose and rocky sections, keeping the SE-R low in the revs and switching to the softer map made it surprisingly rideable and noticeably different. We say don't knock it till you've tried it!

Peachy new plastics have better UV colour protection, particularly the yellow, and are 20 per cent more flexible. The Sella De La Valle seat is well-known across enduro and works better in wet or muddy conditions than the previous type used. The onboard computer is now more water resistant and sits behind a reinforced and redesigned number board and headlight bulb mount.

Ordinarily we'd write a "three things we'd like to see" on the end of a launch report but honestly there aren't three things to be critical about here. The SE-R 125 is a tidy little package from Sherco.





The overall design philosophy was to make sure the SE-R 125 appeals to all-comers. Sherco wants this bike to hit hard with young riders – that's why we see premium components like the V-Force R4 reed valve, the preload adjustable XPlor forks, the Akrapovic exhaust and the map switch as standard. But they also want it to appeal to the bigger market – people who might be novices or want a lighter and easier to ride bike. No question the SE-R 125 is just that, easy to ride and that means confidence and that can obviously mean being faster too.



Polisport

Performance Plastics

FUNCTION AND DESIGN

LIFT BIKE STAND



SHERCO SE-R 125 LAUNCH

"THE SE-R 125 IS A TIDY LITTLE PACKAGE FROM SHERCO THAT APPEALS TO ALL-COMERS."



As with the bigger bikes in Sherco's range, the 125 also has a "Cross Country" sibling, aimed primarily at the US market. The 125 SC-R which is almost identical apart from the obvious – no lights, MX tyres and different suspension settings. It also comes with blue rims which look da bomb.



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Photo: Marcelo Narangin



Graham Jarvis,
King of the BED BULL MINAS RIDERS 2017

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BETA RR 125 MY18 LAUNCH - ITALY

ITALIAN POC

Everybody loves a good surprise, especially when it is a brand new
screamer homologated for enduro competition and seriously pin-legal.
Standing out from Beta's 2018 model range, we take the all-new P
spin to find out how the Italian manufacturer's first two-stroke 125

Words: Andreas Glavas, Photos: Marco Campelli, Cristiano Morello

KET *ROCKET*

new 125cc
umping.
RR 125 for a
5cc weighs in...



Ever since Beta turned a new page with the introduction of their 100% home built four-stroke bikes back in 2010, the Italian manufacturer has been taking well-calculated steps to remain at the forefront of evolution. Launching their big-bore two strokes three years later, they've come a long way since then to become a key player in the enduro market and a force to be reckoned with in EnduroGP World Championship.

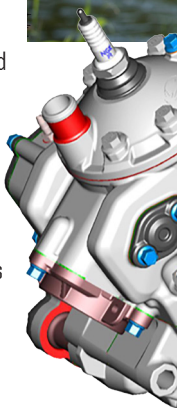
Despite catching everyone by surprise with the launch of their new for 2018 125cc smoker, they by no means rushed to bring the RR 125 into production. Ditching fuel injection and not even using the oil injection system that's been successful in their bigger two strokes, Beta built a 125cc screamer that complies to strict regulations and looks competitive out the crate.

THREE YEARS IN THE MAKING

Taking the decision to add a 125cc machine to their enduro range in early 2014, the team of engineers in the Rignano Sull'Arno factory spent a whole year working on the new motor. Designed and built in-house, the new engine features a 54mm double ring piston, which according to Beta 'provides better seal in low and medium RPM range'. Using a trusted Keihin PWK 36mm carburettor they're combining it with a modern VForce4 reed valve system.

Focused on building a compact and lightweight powerplant, Beta engineers placed the primary shaft under the engine, using magnesium and alloy for the crankcase and covers. With a six-speed gearbox effectively spreading the power, a highlight of the new engine is its reverse opening clutch. Actuating from the outside to the inside, it helps centralise moving weights.

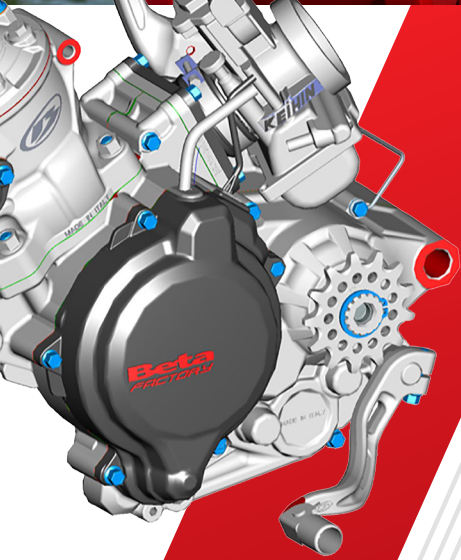
If all is looking well with the RR 125's tech figures on paper, the big question is how on earth did they manage to make a competitive machine comply with stringent Euro4 regulations? Quizzing both Beta's Head of R&D Stefano Fantigini, as well as factory team manager Fabrizio Dini, we were thrown with the same answer: there are no hidden secrets in how they made it happen. It rolls off the production line with a different exhaust and a set of easily removable performance restricting parts. It is homologated in Europe and can easily get registered for road use to be able to enter enduro events across the continent.





**"WE'VE DESIGNED
THE ENGINE CASES
AND THE IGNITION
COVER SO THAT
THEY CAN HOUSE
THE ELECTRIC
STARTER FROM
THE BIGGER
TWO-STROKES."**

**- FEDERICO TOZZI -
BETAMOTOR 2T
PROJECT MANAGER**





HEADING FOR THE ITALIAN HILLS

It only takes an effortless kick to the weird-looking but efficient kick starter to fire up the 125cc engine. Setting out for the enduro test in the hills outside Florence, anticipation turns into excitement as the white and red screamer turns out to be a seriously fun machine.

The first thing to catch the attention is the engine's ability to pull from low RPM. Quite unusual for a tiny 125cc powerplant, it pulls strongly as you exit corners and keeps offering a progressive punch across the mid-range. With the most enjoyable bit coming in the low and mid RPM, the engine pulls through to higher rpm with linear power - shifting gears early gets the best out of it too. Feeling as strong as its claimed 34hp, the RR 125 is a fully-fledged enduro racer that can have you confidently testing your limits a few minutes after you've hopped on its narrow saddle.

A couple of laps later it's time for a few deep breaths at the side of the track. More compact in dimensions from any other model from Beta's 2018 range, the RR 125 manages to accommodate riders of all sizes. Featuring a smaller tank (one litre smaller in capacity) and smaller overall frame dimensions, it's perfectly suitable for up and coming riders from 16 to their early 20s. While still enjoyable for all, a few small mods such as a taller seat or lower footpegs would make it more comfortable for all of us way over our post-teenage era.

**"THE RR 125 COMPLETES OUR TWO-STROKE
RANGE. IT'S THE RIGHT TOOL FOR NATIONAL
AND INTERNATIONAL JUNIOR AND YOUTH
CLASS COMPETITION." GIACOMO CALITERNA -
BETA MOTOR MARKETING OFFICER**



**"SHIFTING GEARS
EYE AND GIVING IT
IT WILL GET THE BEST
REMAINING SAFE A**





**IN THE BLINK OF AN
A HANDFUL OF GAS,
OUT OF YOU WHILE
AND PREDICTABLE..."**

A PURE JOY TO RIDE

The pairing of Sachs forks and rear shock have a few minor upgrades for 2018 in their specific set-up on the RR 125. Offering a progressive reaction in all conditions, their most noticeable asset is they seem to be working perfectly together. Featuring an Enduro specific set-up it is a little on the soft side for anyone weighing over 85kg, but they work well through the stroke providing a well-balanced feeling even when close to their travel limits.

With suspension collaborating well with the double cradle steel frame, the whole package offers impressive stability and a pleasant feeling that no matter what the conditions I always felt in control of my riding. And this is one of the main reasons why the RR 125 is such a pure source of joy. Shifting gears in the blink of an eye and giving it a handful of gas, it will get the best out of you while remaining safe and predictable.

Riding the RR 125 back-to-back with the rest of Beta's 2018 enduro range (in-depth debrief will follow in issue #24), the 125 smoker might not be the fastest out there but it sure as hell was the most fun. With the screaming two-stroke engine begging for more, a well-balanced chassis and super easy handling, it can bring the teenager out of you in a matter of a few corners.



THE BOTTOM LINE

Packing a big punch with the introduction of their all-new RR 125 for model year 2018, Beta offer a highly competitive enduro racer that can be ridden by riders of all levels and all age groups. With the Italian manufacturer claiming the bike is aimed at Junior and Youth class competitors, we're not convinced there won't be many more big kids wanting one too.

Hitting all the right marks, they didn't reinvent the wheel with the RR 125. Putting together solutions that work they built a powerful engine and then designed a compact frame around it. Looking stunning under its white plastics, the new RR 125 features a plastic skid plate and handguards for some protection in extreme or racing conditions.

Hitting the dealer floors before the end of the year is a little bit of a tease, we want it now! Based on history there's a chance the RR 125 will have an advantage over the competition with its competitive price too but there are no RRP's available at time of writing so we'll just have to wait and hope that the white and red screamer is as affordable as it is fun.



**"HITTING THE DEALER FLOORS BEFORE THE
END OF THE YEAR IS A LITTLE BIT OF A TEASE,
WE WANT IT NOW!..."**







“JUST SAYIN...”

3 Things we'd like to see on the RR 125

1. The front brake works fine for the bigger bikes, but on the super light 125 it has a strong initial bite that needs getting used to. In grippy terrain with fresh tyres it's simply stunning. But when traction is far from ideal, it needs trained fingers to get the best out of it.
2. Hats off to Beta for wanting to make the RR 125 affordable for everybody. But for those that don't mind spending the extra bucks, a version fitted with the electric starter and the oil injector as standard wouldn't be a bad idea we reckon.
3. How about a 200cc smoker based on the same engine? With the current offering packing a warmly-welcomed punch in low to mid rpm, Beta's got us drooling over the prospect of getting a few more ccs in that super light and enjoyable package. **E**

NATHAN WATSON



DEFEND YOUR VISION

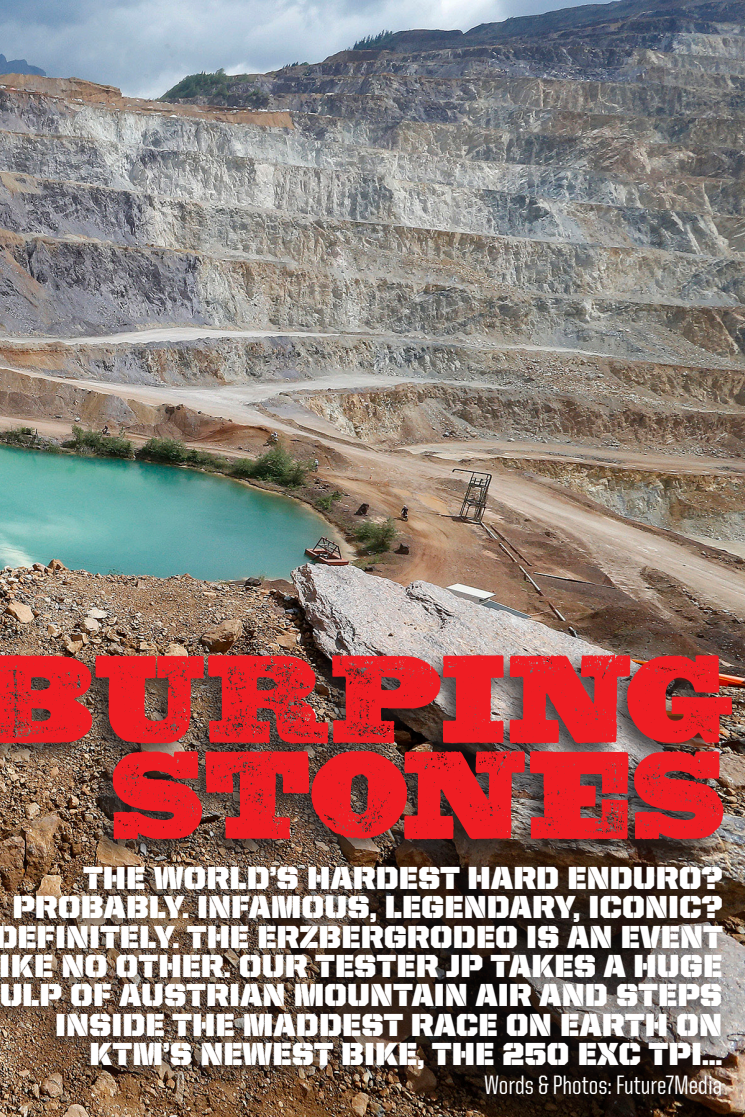
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BURPING STONES

THE WORLD'S HARDEST HARD ENDURO? PROBABLY. INFAMOUS, LEGENDARY, ICONIC? DEFINITELY. THE ERZBERGRODEO IS AN EVENT LIKE NO OTHER. OUR TESTER JP TAKES A HUGE SWIG OF AUSTRIAN MOUNTAIN AIR AND STEPS INSIDE THE MADDEST RACE ON EARTH ON KTM'S NEWEST BIKE, THE 250 EXC TPI...

Words & Photos: Future7Media

The Erzberg Rodeo is one of those events which you have to see to believe. From the moment you first catch sight of the Austrian 'Iron Giant' mountain it's surely a wow moment, awesome in the truest sense of the word. Full of bikes, people, vans, race trucks and beer tents – it is a mad furnace of a place to spend four days.

Awesome for a few minutes until it dawns on you: "I've got to ride that shit!" To know you will be flat-out along the ledges, giving every ounce of beans you have to scale the loose and rocky climbs, as well as knowing you'll be cursing in woods and so utterly blowing out your arse that you can't speak or breathe makes the Eisenerz quarry an inspiring and daunting place to be.

Everybody who's anybody in extreme enduro raced the 2017 event making it a vintage edition and one hell of a win for Alfredo Gomez too. For everyone else – us normal guys and gals – it is easily the biggest race we'll do all year. 1500 riders line-up for the Iron Road Prologue and for many on rally, adventures bikes, scooters, sidecars as well as big capacity enduro bikes it is all they came for and dominates Friday and Saturday. You have to give it everything because getting as high up the qualification is crucial. With 50 riders on each row, the further up the field you can qualify the better.

"PROLOGUE IS A SPEED RUN, SNAKING THROUGH BULLDOZED ROCK PILE CHICANES WHICH OPEN OUT INTO WIDE QUARRY TRACKS – ROCK FACES ON ONE SIDE AND BIG DROPS ON THE OTHER."

It's a speed run, snaking through bulldozed rock pile chicanes which open out into wide quarry tracks with rock faces on one side and big drops on the other – it is loose and rocky. More than once it is utterly flat-stick, top gear, throttle pinned and the bike is dancing all over.









Track knowledge makes a huge difference in the tight timed qualification and I have none. I easily waste seconds rolling off in a couple of places, then not braking when I should for a couple of corners. By the time you've thought "is this a crest or a hairpin?" you've already lost seconds and heap of places in the timing sheets.

70mph on a 250 two-stroke over loose rocks is a game of how close you dare come to crashing. The higher you climb, the faster it gets until my eyes are watering and it feels like I'm dancing on the back of an angry pig.

I finish 56 seconds behind fastest man Ossi Reisenger on his 501 Husky which equates to 140th - proving times are tight! Ten seconds faster means 14 places higher up for a third row start.

"...A GAME OF HOW CLOSE YOU DARE COME TO CRASHING. THE HIGHER YOU CLIMB, THE FASTER IT GETS UNTIL MY EYES ARE WATERING AND IT FEELS LIKE I'M DANCING ON THE BACK OF AN ANGRY PIG."

Sunday morning dawns with a lie-in for once. Race day starts at midday and there's plenty of time to find out you should have replaced your green numbers (and transponder) for new white numbers (yep, I did that). Something didn't seem right as riders gathered and I was the only one with green numbers. I have Lee Wren to thank for filling me in where a rider briefing and even Erzberg top man Karl Katoch failed - thanks Lee.



The aim is to get as far as you can through the 25 check points. Twenty-five riders made it to the finish in 2017, usually it is less, occasionally no-one does. But for most of the 500 – including me – it is about taking on the Iron Giant and seeing how many rounds they can take a beating. It's not all torture, some of the giant climbs like Three Kings are awesome to ride. The new TPI 250 sails up them finding grip better than I hoped for.

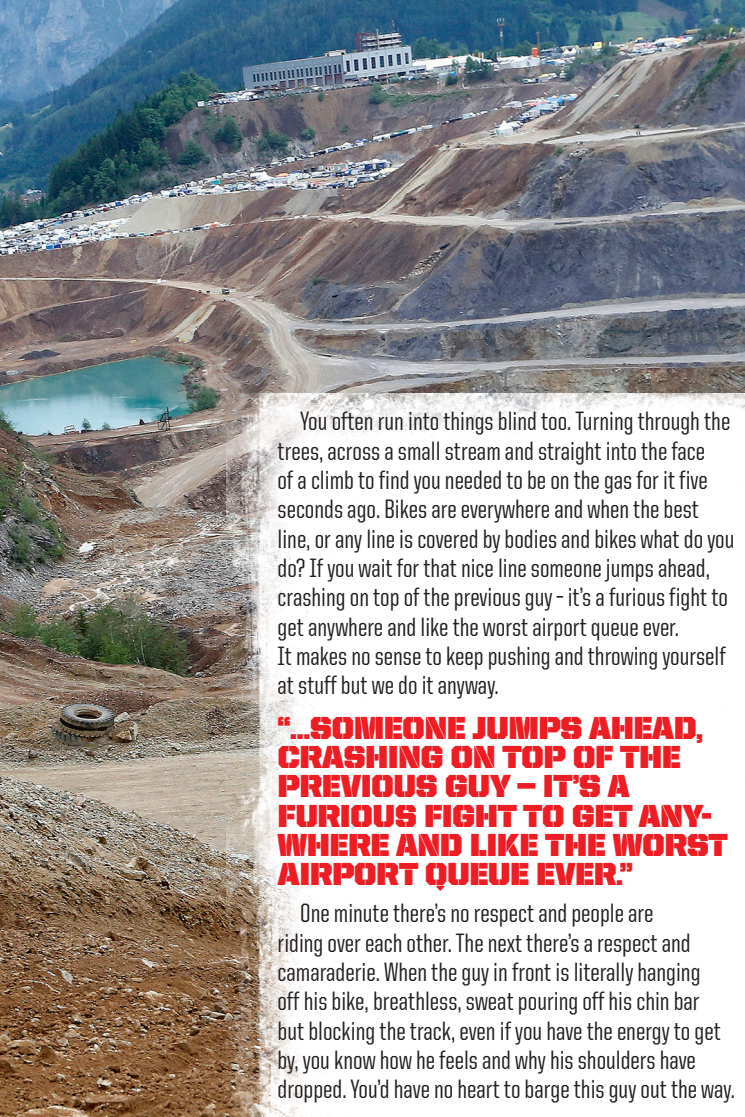
“...WHAT MAKES ERZBERG'S RED BULL HARE SCRAMBLE HARD IS WHAT'S HIDDEN AWAY IN THE TREES ...IT'S LIKE A WAR ZONE.”

But what makes Erzberg's Red Bull Hare Scramble hard is what's hidden away in the trees. Short and savage technically difficult climbs in the woods are physically demanding to get through. When one leads to another and bodies are strewn every step of the way it is like a war zone. It is the brutal reality of the Hare Scramble no-one told you about.

It's hot, tight and often you have no choice but to follow the rider in front or queue for long periods. The queues offer some respite in truth, welcome respite. When you can ride like Gomez and Jarvis these parts are easier, and the higher up the order you get the clearer the runs at them too, but it is still hard.







You often run into things blind too. Turning through the trees, across a small stream and straight into the face of a climb to find you needed to be on the gas for it five seconds ago. Bikes are everywhere and when the best line, or any line is covered by bodies and bikes what do you do? If you wait for that nice line someone jumps ahead, crashing on top of the previous guy - it's a furious fight to get anywhere and like the worst airport queue ever. It makes no sense to keep pushing and throwing yourself at stuff but we do it anyway.

“...SOMEONE JUMPS AHEAD, CRASHING ON TOP OF THE PREVIOUS GUY - IT'S A FURIOUS FIGHT TO GET ANYWHERE AND LIKE THE WORST AIRPORT QUEUE EVER.”

One minute there's no respect and people are riding over each other. The next there's a respect and camaraderie. When the guy in front is literally hanging off his bike, breathless, sweat pouring off his chin bar but blocking the track, even if you have the energy to get by, you know how he feels and why his shoulders have dropped. You'd have no heart to barge this guy out the way.





In the end, the “finish” comes as an anti-climax for everyone except the 25 best riders who see the chequered flag. For the rest of us 475 riders we’ve all got as far as we can and are spread far and wide across the Iron Giant.

With four hours notched up I’m waved on from check point 15 (Burping Stones) to find a small gaggle of riders peering over the edge of a mighty descent looking at the savage pile of rocks below – the infamous Carl’s Dinner. In three languages the consensus is time’s up and we’re done. There are no flags, no finishing line and no champagne.

**“IN THREE LANGUAGES
THE CONSENSUS IS
TIME’S UP AND WE’RE
DONE. THERE ARE NO
FLAGS, NO FINISHING LINE
AND NO CHAMPAGNE.”**

The record shows a slightly disappointing 130th place. It’d been higher but an off-piste mistake and lack of fitness took its toll. It was a huge learning curve. The truth is to earn a sight of the chequered flag at Erzberg you’ve got to be a better rider and certainly a fitter and stronger one than I was. Hard enduro doesn’t get any harder than Erzberg. Burping Stones it is, until next time.



ERZBERG RIDDEN & RACED ON KTM'S 2018 250 EXC TPI

The reason for racing this mad event was always on the back of testing KTM's newest model, the 250 EXC TPI, fresh out the box and among the first in the world to race this landmark bike.

KTM's 2018 250 EXC TPI was only launched a month before the ErzbergRodeo and we were lucky enough to get hold of the launch bikes on a return ticket back for the main event. What a chance and what a test, which the new bike passed with flying colours.



Basically this is a bog-standard bike in every way except a short list of Power Parts: a fan, wrap-around handguards, disc protection front and rear, an exhaust protector and a couple of anodised parts left from the launch like the triple clamps.

I had second thoughts: should I have opted for the 300? But the 250 was more than enough power without the extra weight. A 300 is the best tool for the job, that's why the top riders use them, but the 300 can also be a good way of sapping strength. Stronger power delivery helps in places but it also takes more hanging onto and I definitely didn't miss the extra horses as much as I appreciated the character of the 250.







NUMBER ONE
ONE BRAC



The TPI models have two major advantages in life: fuel economy and consistent fuelling. We knew from the world press model launch in June the TPI engines were running more efficiently, but four hours riding and no fill up? I know Erzberg isn't flat-stick on the gas but still, that's not bad going.

"...WHERE OTHER BIKES WERE EITHER BOILING OVER OR CLOGGING THEMSELVES UP WITH BLUE SMOKE, THE TPI KEPT ON AS CRISP AS IT STARTED THE RACE."

It was consistent too. A lot of time in the woods was really hot running and where other bikes were either boiling over or clogging themselves up with blue smoke, the TPI kept on as crisp as it started the race.

The deal to run a standard bike suited me fine apart from the standard Maxxis tyres which weren't up to the task because they aren't designed for it. Despite a soft mousse inside, without the tread or flexibility in the tyre, the toughest of the climbs were harder and there were times I had no feel. I can only blame myself for this though. **E**



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HUSQVARNA MY 2018 TPI LAUNCH

GRIZZLY INJECTION

IN SEARCH OF GRIZZLY BEARS IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES
AVERAGE CLUB RIDER GETS A VERY REAL WORLD TEST
HUSQVARNA'S MY18 TEI FUEL INJECTED TWO-STROKE

WORDS: SAM DAVIDSON / PHOTOS: MARCO CAM



OUR
T OF
OKES
PELLI

**"...WITH SUPER ENDURO WORLD CHAMPION
COLTON HAAKER AS OUR GUIDE, THIS LAUNCH
WASN'T GOING TO DISAPPOINT..."**





An out of the blue message from my good friend Jonty went something along the lines of "How would you be fixed for attending the Husqvarna MY18 global press launch?" My response as you can imagine, was "Hell yeah, you bet, I mean if you think I'm up to the job?"

Being the average club enduro rider who qualifies for the Over 50 class I guess I'm not what you would call your usual magazine test rider. And the bare fact is – this is my first ever bike launch, so now you'll understand me asking the question "Do you think I'm up to the job?"

Having not ridden a big bore smoker for a while I was keen to try out the new TEi models as a comparison to Enduro 21's 2016 300 EXC long termers and my current ride a Husqvarna FE250 2017. What you're going to read here is how the MY18 TEi models stack up in the hands of your average club rider.

Following KTM's EXC TPI launch, a lot has already been written about the characteristics of the fuel injected two-stroke motor – how smooth the power delivery is, how tractable the bike is and how it still sounds and feels like a two-stroke.

Husqvarna's official press launch at the Panorama Mountain Ski Resort, four hours west of Calgary and nestled between Mt. Nelson and Mt. Brewer, had Super Enduro World Champion Colton Haaker as our guide, this launch wasn't going to disappoint.

HUSQVARNA TE 250i

THE CLUBMAN'S PINNER

Jumping aboard the TE 250i and with adjustments only to the Magura front brake and clutch levers left me at ease with the riding position. A nice touch with running both Magura brake and clutch is having only to carry one spare lever as both are interchangeable.

Husqvarna have opted for lock-on bonded type grips, which offered a good comfortable grip without being overly soft. Also the option of a bare throttle twist grip is available should you wish to fit aftermarket grips along with a choice of separate twist grip cams that allow you to choose how quickly the throttle opens.

With no choke fitted, the electric start fired into life with ease. The usual two-stroke opening of the throttle only serves to hinder the starting with either a cold or hot engine. It has a hot start system via a choke-type knob fitted to the throttle body that opens a port which draws in some air (much like a four stroke hot start).

Something I hadn't really thought about was the benefit of not spilling fuel or risk of flooding the motor when you tip the bike over – something that I'd put to the test later!

Another positive is not having to worry about pre-mixing fuel. The oil is injected through a separate injector and stored in a plastic oil tank positioned just behind the rear of the fuel tank. Filling of the two-stroke oil tank is done via a remote filler point positioned just behind the headstock.

Husqvarna says the oil tank should contain sufficient oil for three to four tanks of fuel. Husqvarna also claim the fuel injected bikes use around 30 per cent less fuel than their carbureted cousins (at least, based on our KTM TPI tests - Ed) and looking at the fuel used during the test ride I have to agree.



**“...I HADN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT THE
BENEFIT OF NOT SPILLING FUEL OR RISK OF
FLOODING WHEN YOU TIP THE BIKE OVER –
SOMETHING THAT I'D PUT TO THE TEST LATER!..”**



MIXING GAS, HAULING ASS

Heading out towards the start of the forest with dust blinding our visibility, the front end dived into an unseen gully. Thankfully both the reaction of the WP XPLOR 48 forks and the throttle let both bike and rider pass relatively unhindered and soon we were climbing up the mountainside on single track trails, snaking our way through the Canadian forestry.

Initially the forks felt a little soft but in the forest the bike felt well balanced and never felt the need to adjust either the forks or the shock. Weighing in at just a little over 12 stone, plus riding kit, the standard spring rates were just about right for me.

Adjustment of the WP XPLOR fork compression, rebound and spring preload can all be done simply enough on the fork tops and without tools. The TE 250i felt at home, easily maneuverable and with an abundance of low down torque to power up a soft, sandy forest track with awkward turns, exposed tree roots and sharp climbs littered with loose stones which made for an interesting ride.

Fitted as standard with a handlebar mounted map switch I chose map two, the "softer" of the two maps available and offering more lowdown torque. It's worth noting the two maps not only alter the ignition curve but also the fuelling of the engine and unlike other two-stroke map switches the difference between the two is really noticeable.

Chatting to one of Husqvarna TPI research and development engineers, I was keen to find out if an adjustment to the fuelling of the bike was possible without the use of specialist equipment – in the same way many riders fine-tune carburetion to suit their own riding style or track conditions.

It was explained that no adjustment of the ECU was possible, only adjustment of an air screw on the throttle body but this only affects the first eighth to one-quarter of the throttle. However with five different sensors all feeding data to the ECU, the fuelling should already be optimised for any given set of conditions. Certainly during this test, with climbs reaching 2500 metres above sea level, the engine responded well from our base all the way to the summit.

**"...AN ABUNDANCE OF LOW DOWN TORQUE TO
POWER UP A SOFT, SANDY FOREST TRACK WITH
EXPOSED TREE ROOTS AND SHORT, SHARP
CLIMBS LITTERED WITH LOOSE STONES..."**



**“...THE TE 250I FELT AT HOME, EASILY
MANEUVERABLE AND WITH AN ABUNDANCE
OF LOW DOWN TORQUE TO POWER UP A SOFT,
SANDY FOREST TRACK...”**





MAPPABLE DIFFERENCE

Leaving the forest single track and ripping up a ski slope is test enough for any machine's power. Here the difference between the two maps was really noticeable. Select map two, and with the motor really singing, second gear pulls with ease and it was a joy to ride. However, selecting third gear knocked the edge off the motor. Having a crack at the same hill later in the day, this time with map one, allowed me to pull third gear with a good bit more speed.

Returning down the mountain via ski slopes and single tracks the Magura brakes felt strong and balanced and never faded. In fact their great feedback instilled confidence during some of the steeper descents. One of the riders in our group commented that they had felt the front brake lever creep back towards the bars after prolonged braking, though it's not something I experienced.

As mentioned previously a benefit of riding an injection bike is there will be no fuel flowing out the carb breathers or flooding the motor when the inevitable upside down moment happens. Negotiating an awkward downhill turn with a well-polished log at an awkward angle, I lost the front off the track and tipped into the forest.

The unplanned get-off proved a good test of the bike's protection and although by no means high speed it was quite spectacular and arse-clenching.

With the bike uprighted and dragged back onto the track, a quick visual check over showed no obvious signs of damage. With a quick prod of the electric start button, the bike fired back into life without any of the fuss usually associated when your two-stroke has been upside down. Test mission complete!

"I CAME AWAY WANTING TO RIDE BOTH THE 250 AND 300 CLOSER TO HOME AND SEA LEVEL, SAY WITHIN A MUDDY AND ROOT-INFESTED FOREST..."

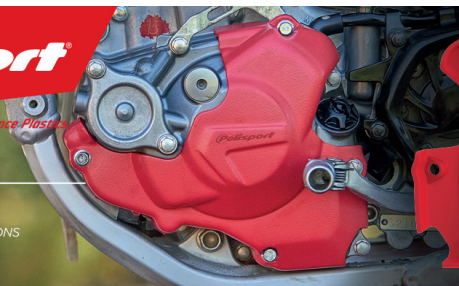


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HUSQVARNA TE 300i

ROWDY BIGGER BROTHER

Compared to the 250 the first point is the 300 motor feels lazier and with more engine vibration low down. Riding up through the single track forest's twists and turns I found selecting the right gear more difficult compared to the 250. Second gear felt a little too sharp with the power delivery and third just a touch too tall, which laboured the motor slightly, not to the point where it felt like it might stall but enough for the bike to feel heavier and more awkward to turn. I dare say in the hands of an expert rider they would appreciate and make good use of the extra power.

The difference between engine maps wasn't quite as noticeable as the TE 250i in the trees but once onto the open going and faced with the climbs of the ski slopes, the 300 smoker really came into its own. As you would expect the big bore motor blasted its way up with ease. Switching maps meant the difference between pulling third gear in map two or fourth gear with the standard map. Needless to say I opted for map two – the softer of the two options.

Husqvarna figures show there is little more than 200 grams of difference in weight between the two models. While it shares the frame, suspension and brake set up with the 250, the handling of the 300 felt decidedly different due to the nature of the motor making it feel slightly heavier in the slower going.

So much riding leads to so much thinking and I came away wanting to ride both the 250 and 300 closer to home and sea level, say within a muddy and root-infested forest would make for an interesting test! One thing's for sure it left me wanting more. **E**

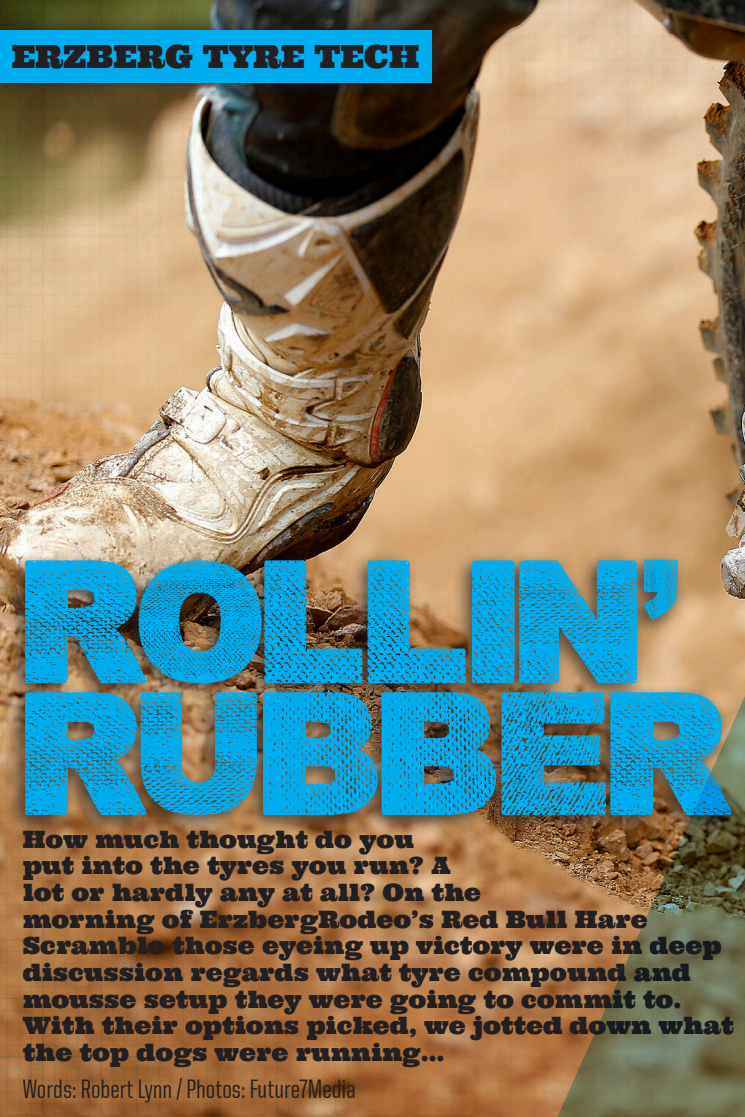
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ERZBERG TYRE TECH

ROLLIN' RUBBER

How much thought do you put into the tyres you run? A lot or hardly any at all? On the morning of ErzbergRodeo's Red Bull Hare Scramble those eyeing up victory were in deep discussion regards what tyre compound and mousse setup they were going to commit to. With their options picked, we jotted down what the top dogs were running...

Words: Robert Lynn / Photos: Future7Media





Alfredo Gomez

Team: KTM Enduro Factory Racing

Result: 1st

Front Tyre: GoldenTyre GT 216AA 90/100-21

Front Mousse: GoldenTyre G-Mousse 90/100

Rear Tyre: GoldenTyre GT 216X 140/80-18

Rear Mousse: 120 G-MousseX

Notes: Alfredo used a pre-run rear mousse but opted for a new mousse on the front. It's his go-to tyre step up for the majority of his hard enduro racing.

Graham Jarvis

Team: Rockstar Energy Husqvarna Factory Racing

Result: 2nd

Front Tyre: GoldenTyre 216 AA 90/100-21

Front Mousse: GoldenTyre G-Mousse 90/90

Rear Tyre: GoldenTyre GT 216X 140/80-18

Rear Mousse: GoldenTyre Extreme Mousse

Notes: Graham ran a pre-drilled and pre-run mousse. He also used two rim locks on the rear tyre.



Cody Webb

Team: KTM Enduro Factory Racing

Result: 3rd

Front Tyre: Dunlop Geomax MX52F 90/90-21

Front Mousse: Tyre Balls – quantity 36, PSI 10

Rear Tyre: Dunlop Sports D756 110/100-18

Rear Mousse: Modified mousse

Notes: Cody's rear moose was drilled and pre-run prior to fitting. Like Colton he also used Tyre Balls instead of a mousse. However he used one less than Colton Haaker, which explained the need for a higher PSI.





Wade Young

Team: Sherco Factory Racing

Result: 4th

Front Tyre: Michelin Comp VI 90/100-21

Front Mousse: N/A

Rear Tyre: Mitas EF-07 Super Light 140/80-18

Rear Mousse: N/A

Notes: Wade Young and Sherco teammate Mario Roman used a Mitas rear tyre and a Michelin front.



Jonny Walker

Team: KTM Enduro Factory Racing

Result: 5th

Front Tyre: GoldenTyre GT 216 80/100-21

Front Mousse: N/A

Rear Tyre: GoldenTyre GT523KX 110/100-18

Rear Mousse: 120 drilled, pre run

Notes: Jonny opted for the “skinny” 216 over the “fatty” 216AA. The 523KX features a MX style pattern with tall nobbles and is a super-soft compound. Different than what his “GoldenTyre teammates” opted for, it was a gamble that didn’t quite pay off.

Paul Bolton

Team: EuroTek KTM

Result: 6th

Front Tyre: GoldenTyre GT216 AA 90/100-21

Front Mousse: Mefo MOM 21

Rear Tyre: Mitas EF-07 Super Soft (double green stripe)

Rear Mousse: Mefo 18-1EX

Notes: Paul Bolton opted for two different tyre manufactures for the Red Bull Hare Scramble, favouring Mitas on the rear and GoldenTyre up front. Both tyres and the Mefo mousses are available from him direct at www.dirtbikespec.com





Colton Haaker

Team: Rockstar Energy Husqvarna Factory Racing

Result: 14th

Front Tyre: Dunlop Geomax MX52F 90/90-21

Front Mousse: Tyre Balls – quantity 37, PSI 7

Rear Tyre: Dunlop Sports D756 110/100-18

Rear Mousse: Modified Dunlop 140/100

Notes: Colton opted for the tyre ball setup on the front tyre that he runs in endurocross. **E**

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1-ON-1 JAMES HILLIER

The ErzbergRodeo is on every motorcycle rider's bucket list, even Isle of Man TT racers like James Hillier. Seven days after racing to fourth in the Senior TT, Hillier was on the start line for the Iron Road Prologue, having swapped slick tyres for knobbly ones.

Words: Robert Lynn

Photos: Future7Media, James Hillier, Double Red





Renowned as the world's most dangerous road race, you would imagine that the majority of Isle of Man TT racers would embrace a relaxed and chilled holiday following two intense weeks of racing at mind boggling speed.

Prolonging the TT Blues and a return to normal living, James Hillier loaded his Kawasaki KX250F into his camper van within hours of returning home and drove 14 hours solo to



Eisenerz in Austria to join 1,800 other octane hungry, throttle-junkie dirt bikers in Europe's largest iron ore quarry for the ErzbergRodeo.

Finally getting an opportunity to experience first hand the madness of Erzberg, Hillier successfully made it into the Red Bull Hare Scramble, reaching Checkpoint 7: Devil's Kitchen and finish a more-than respectable 423rd overall.

*"It's always been on my list to do
and thankfully this year it's not
clashed with the TT and I had a spare
weekend to finally come and do it."*



"...when I was on the boat home from the Isle of Man I was already on the phone sorting bits and pieces with Kawasaki, Metzeler and Parts Europe to come here. It's prolonged my TT comedown."





James, what has lured you all the way from the Isle of Man TT Races to the ErzbergRodeo in Austria?

James Hillier: "I don't get to do a lot of enduro at home but I enjoy my dirt bike and for me Erzberg is pretty much the biggest challenge you can do in enduro bar the Dakar. It's always been on my list to do and thankfully this year it's not clashed with the TT and I had a spare weekend to finally come and do it."

What sort of preparation have you done for this because it's less than seven days since the TT actually finished?

"My prep is limited, maybe none existent! I literally got home from the TT on Sunday night, unloaded my camper van and then reloaded it again for the ErzbergRodeo on Monday. I got the ferry on Tuesday night to France and drove across Europe on my own to get here for Wednesday night."

Is it difficult to wind down from the Isle of Man TT?

"You usually get what we call 'TT Blues' as you return back to 'normal life'. Life gets slow again in comparison to what you spent two weeks doing – it's weird to explain until you go through it. But when I was on the boat home from the Isle of Man I was already on the phone sorting bits and pieces with Kawasaki, Metzeler and Parts Europe to come here. It's prolonged my TT comedown."





*"I'm here to enjoy myself,
give it a good go and get
as far as I can."*





Do you spend much time on an enduro bike?

"During the winter I try to get out as much as I can but also because of my road racing commitments I have to scale it back once the season is going, so I haven't ridden much prior to this due to the TT. I also know I'm not on the perfect bike for Erzberg (Kawasaki KX250F) but I'm here to enjoy myself, give it a good go and get as far as I can."

In terms of a dirt bike festival, has ErzbergRodeo met your expectations?

"It's definitely one of those bucket list events to do. You see the videos and photos and wonder if it will live up to that and yes it certainly does. Once I get home I'll be telling my friends they've got to come and do it too. It's not just a race, it's a festival – bikes of all shapes and sizes and just thousands of crazy people doing wild things all weekend. It's an eye opener and is a cool thing if you're into bikes, beer and getting loose – especially the table sliding in the beer tent!"

Seven days ago you were racing the Senior TT, lapping at 131mph. Now you're riding fifth gear pinned up a dirt track fire road. Does it even compare?

"A little bit. The prologue is a little bit like the TT. It's fast, real fast and you set off in intervals trying to catch the guy in front of you. The only thing is that you didn't really know where I was going, whereas on the Isle of Man I know every twist, turn and bump. But at the end of the day, it's just you and your motorbike and that's what it's all about for me. When your riding, anywhere, and having a good run, well that's what life is about. The basics are always the same."

After this year's Senior TT we can officially say you are the record holder for the world's fastest scrub with that close call through Ballagarey Corner. Did it look worse than it felt?

"No it was pretty bad, as bad as it looked. I can look back and laugh at it now because I'm still here, I survived it, but it was actually a suspension problem that caused it. There's corners on the TT course that you just don't fuck with and Ballagarey Corner is one. I treat it with respect every single time. That lap I rode it no differently but it erupted into what you saw on TV. I believe the fact that I was going so fast is what saved me – the gyration of the bike, the wind – I locked on and didn't let go. When the race was stopped due to Ian Hutchinson's crash we changed the shock for the restart and I went faster. But I had lost a bit of my mojo and just wanted to take it home safe for fourth."

From a dirt bike rider's perspective, what is it like to twist the throttle at the TT for six laps at that speed for over one hour and 40 minutes?

"The intensity and focus level is the hardest part. It's more mental than physical. You know where you're going, you know what's coming after each corner so you can almost anticipate everything. You just get in the zone and do it. Sometimes I talk to myself going round to keep sharp. Like any race sometimes you wonder why you do it. But it's the challenge. It's doing something that doesn't make sense but you still want to do it, like the pro guys putting themselves through hell to win Erzberg. And for me, at the TT, it's the superbike win – that's the one I want."

Finally, has Erzberg given you a taste for any more enduro, what about Red Bull Romaniacs?

"I'd love to do more and improve my riding. But financially it's hard, plus I've also got to make time for my family and business. Maybe down the road. Erzberg was the main one to tick off the list this year but certainly if the opportunity arises I'd love to race the Red Bull Romaniacs." **e**

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Enduro illustrated is produced by Future7Media Ltd

Managing Editor: Jonty Edmunds
Jonty@future7media.com

Designed by: Ian Roxburgh / Design 147
Ian@Design147.co.uk

Contributors: Jon Pearson, Robert Lynn, Andreas Glavas, KTM images/Marco Campeli, Cristiano Morello, Marcin Kin, Lluís Llurba, Shan Moore, Red Bull Media Archive, JM Pouget, Sam Davidson, James Hillier, Double Red



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